

CONCERN REGARDING CAMPAIGN FINANCE REFORM

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 21, 1997, the gentleman from Connecticut (Mr. SHAYS) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. SHAYS. Mr. Speaker, I do not usually address the House on 5 minutes before the session, but I am not sure how much time will be given to debate campaign finance reform when these bills are brought before us under suspension. I just want to make a number of points for the RECORD for that debate.

First, I want to express my concern that on a Friday afternoon, after Members were proceeding to leave, the House was told for the first time that we would have debate on four campaign finance bills, debate that likely will begin before many Members get back to Washington.

I would also like to express concern as to how we will be debating these bills. We will have four campaign bills debated under suspension of the calendar, which has three major flaws:

We cannot amend a bill under suspension.

The debate is limited to each side having 20 minutes, so a total of 40 minutes for the major issue of campaign finance reform. Admittedly, there will be four 40-minute debates, because there are four bills.

And it takes, as has been pointed out by my colleague, the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. MEEHAN), a two-thirds vote to pass legislation. In the Senate, they need 60 votes to invoke cloture and actually end debate and have a vote on a bill, 60 votes out of 100, or 60 percent. Here we need, in the House, under suspension, 66 and two-thirds percent of the membership's vote. Mr. Speaker, this is not the Senate, thank goodness, and it should not take a supermajority to pass meaningful campaign finance reform.

I would like to now address the issue of what bills are coming forward. They are all bills that have been promoted by Republicans, not Democrats, so the Democrat party and leadership was not consulted in what bills would come up. It strikes me that, at the very least, they should have been. Had I been in the minority, I would be outraged to see Democrats do the same thing to a Republican minority.

Second, not only were Democrats not consulted, Democrat proposals are not being allowed to be debated. I am wondering why we would not allow such a debate, given the rule says we need two-thirds to pass.

Third, I would like to express the concern that a bipartisan group of Members who have been working in good faith have not been consulted and that some of the bills are bipartisan. So there are many reasons to express concern about the process, which, is deplorable.

Having said that, I want to acknowledge that three of these bills, in my

judgment, merit support. I do not intend to vote against a good bill just because I do not like the process. I vote against a rule because I do not like the process. I have been in public life 24 years in the State House and in Congress, and I learned a long time ago you do not vote against a good bill simply because you do not like the process.

The Thomas bill is a comprehensive bill worked on just by Republicans. It is a good-faith attempt to get a bill the Republican party likes. To me, it is not a bill that merits support in its present condition. It has flaws to it that I hope are pointed out during the debate, but it was a comprehensive effort to deal with Republican concerns.

The FEC bill, providing disclosure when you raise and spend money, is a no-brainer for me. That should get our support.

A ban on foreign contributions, how could we vote against a bill that bans foreign contributions? It gets my support, if that is, in fact, the bill that comes forward.

Paycheck protection is a little more controversial. I understand why some might not vote for it. It basically says if you are a member of a union, the union has to get your permission before it supports particular candidates or political causes. I think they should get permission of a member beforehand.

My wife had to get out of the union because her money was being given to candidates she did not support. The only way she could prevent this was to invoke the Beck rule and say her money could not be used. Under the Beck rule she is forced out of the union, and pays an agency fee.

Mr. Speaker, 84 percent of my constituents said they believe, and I quote, "Our democracy is threatened by the influence of unlimited campaign contributions by individuals, corporations, labor unions, and other interest groups." A biased statement?

I asked what my constituents felt in a questionnaire I sent to them. Fifty-one percent strongly agreed, 33 percent agreed. Eighty-four percent of my constituents believe our democracy is threatened by the influence of unlimited campaign contributions by individuals, corporations, labor unions, and other interest groups. Regrettably, their Representative will not be able to vote for the McCain-Feingold bill, which prevents soft money, those unlimited contributions my constituents abhor.

CAMPAIGN FINANCE REFORM PROCESS HAS BEEN RIGGED

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 21, 1997, the gentleman from California (Mr. FARR) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. FARR of California. Mr. Speaker, let the record show that we have three former Peace Corps volunteers on the

floor today, the gentleman from Connecticut (Mr. SHAYS), I appreciate his remarks, the Speaker pro tempore, and myself.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to discuss probably the issue of today, which is campaign finance reform. What is happening today is that the process has been rigged. We have a suspension of democracy, not a suspension of consent items before the House.

We are scheduled to vote this evening on campaign finance reform, on four bills, as the gentleman from Connecticut (Mr. SHAYS) pointed out, all Republican bills without any Democrat input, although the Democrat bill that I authored has 106 cosponsors, the most that any campaign finance reform bill has ever had in the history of this House.

I would like to speak a little bit about that history, because we have, in the past, passed campaign finance reform. In fact, if Members will go back to probably times when some of the Members here were serving, the 100th Congress, in 1987 and 1988, the House bill was introduced by a House Member from California, Mr. Coelho. It had 96 cosponsors in all.

Then the Senate bill, which was S. 2, was introduced by a Democrat from Oklahoma, Senator Boren. That bill was filibustered by the Republicans for a record of seven cloture votes, and it was defeated by the Republican filibuster.

In the 101st Congress, 1991 to 1992, again Mr. Swift, a Democrat from Washington, introduced the House bill here, which had several cosponsors, and it passed the House. It passed on a bipartisan vote, 255 to 155, including 15 Republicans that voted for the bill.

Then what happened is that the conferees, because the Senate blocked the conferees, were never appointed. So, again, the second time that a bill had gotten blocked by Republican efforts.

In the 102nd Congress, which is 1991 to 1992, the gentleman from Connecticut (Mr. GEJDENSON) sponsored the bill. It had 82 cosponsors in all. It passed the House on November 25, 1991, by a vote of 273 to 156. The Senate had a similar measure.

The House agreed to the Senate measure and it passed the Senate, it was again by Senator Boren, by a vote of 56 to 42. It went to conference. The conference report was voted on by this House 259 to 165 on April 9, 1992. Guess what happened in 1992? On May 5, President Bush vetoed the bill.

That is similar to the bill that I have up today, H.R. 600. There is not much difference. It became, I think, the bill, most of which is in the Shays-Meehan bill. Again, an effort by the Republicans to block campaign finance reform.

Then in the 103rd Congress, the gentleman from Connecticut (Mr. GEJDENSON) again introduced this bill, H.R. 3. It passed the House on November 22, 1993, by a vote of 255 to 175. The Senate